

APPENDIX III

AGE-FRIENDLY ACTIONS WITH DETAILS AND RATIONALE

Respect and Social Inclusion

RSI 1 Expand, and promote, intergenerational activities

The purpose of this initiative is to enhance activities or programs that increase cooperation, interaction or exchange between any two generations. It is hoped that this initiative will create a legacy project that increases awareness, builds community, impacts social good, and provides opportunities for creative expression and multi-generational collaboration with ongoing opportunities and room to expand over time.

1. Older people (65+) are the fastest growing portion of the U.S. population and are expected to almost double by 2030 in Howard County (when the youngest boomers turn 66). At that time about 1 out of every 5 Howard County residents will be 65 and older (20% of the population).ⁱ
2. The special group status of older adults for housing, health care, educational and economic support, and transportation has served to further isolate older adults from other age groups. Conversely, children and youth, who need adult guidance and relationships, typically find little opportunity for meaningful exchanges with older adults. The shift from extended to more nuclear family structure has further contributed to isolation among older adults.

Moreover, this prevailing pattern of age segregation has been linked to the decline in life satisfaction among older persons and the increase in negative stereotypes toward older adults among younger people. Yet, efforts to programmatically bring children and youth together with older adults have led to positive outcomes for both older adults and the young.ⁱⁱ

3. Depending on program design, intergenerational initiatives can function to promote educational objectives, arts and recreation interests, desired states of health and welfare, and socio-emotional well-being. (Universities, Arts Council), The value and importance of bringing generations together through intergenerational programs is becoming well known and there are many benefits these programs are bringing to

participants of all ages. There is compelling evidence of a reciprocal relationship between volunteering and well-being for young and old alike and intergenerational programs have been found to diminish ageist stereotypes, strengthen communities, and lead to improved services and outcomes for children, youth and older adults.ⁱⁱⁱ

Among others, some of the key benefits include:

- a) Energizing older adults and giving them a sense of purpose, especially when they're sharing their experience and skills. According to Generations Unlimited^{iv}, older adults who regularly volunteer with children burn more calories per week, experience fewer falls, and do better on memory tests than their peers. There is compelling evidence that finding purpose and engagement also contributes to reduction in instances of Alzheimer's in older adults^v;
 - b) Reducing a sense of isolation for older adults potentially relieves or lessens depression;
 - c) All generations learn new skills. Older adults can learn new technologies from the younger generation and youth can benefit from mature mentoring from their wise friends;
 - d) Helping younger generations understand aging and face their own more positively; and
 - e) Dispelling negative stereotypes and encouraging bonding among generations. For children and youth who don't have grandparents or other elders in their families, engaging with older adults fills a social gap. According to Forbes, intergenerational programs may be "our kids' best chance to learn from a caring older adult who not only has 'been there and done that,' but has a biological and instinctive need to give the next generation the best opportunity to succeed."^{vi}
4. Howard County has a diverse and growing population. The diverse economy of the county attracts jobs and industries of all types, from basic services and retail, to manufacturing and warehousing, to the high-tech jobs of the future. This results in a highly educated and talented pool of residents of all ages. Also, the diversity of housing draws a diverse population made up of many races who speak a variety of languages. And finally, given the high quality of its school system and broad scope of services, Howard County attracts many families with children. As a result, it has a

higher proportion of families with children compared to Maryland and in general, the U.S.^{vii}

5. Howard County conducted an Age-Friendly survey in the first quarter of 2020 to gauge impact of aging that could relate to the Age-Friendly initiative. While the findings are too numerous to cite in full, one important area was the extent to which residents feels lonely and at what ages and demographics loneliness seem to increase. Eleven percent of respondents overall reported feeling lonely “often” or “almost constantly” (this is lower than national estimates, which are around 17%). Females, those with lower education attainment, lower income levels, in poor health, speakers of languages other than English, especially among Asian and Hispanic communities, and among those in the older age brackets are more likely to feel lonely. Expanding volunteering opportunities for the older adult as well as for the younger population through increasing intergenerational programs will help reduce loneliness among Howard County residents. Although the survey was conducted prior to COVID 19, it significantly revealed that a significant fraction of people, 28% report that they would like to volunteer more and the desire to increase (or decrease) volunteerism in the coming year was strongly linked to age. For example, 36% of those under age 50 and 27% of those 70-79 expressed a desire to increase volunteer activities. Moreover, only 7% of those age 65+ stated they intended to decrease the amount of their volunteer activities in the coming year.
6. Non-profit and public organizations that rely on volunteers need an adequate supply of volunteers who are effective in the performance of assigned roles. Yet, little is known about what influences older adults to start, continue, or quit volunteering, or what motivates older volunteers. Moreover, the transition to encore adulthood often includes a renegotiation of life, both personally and professionally – and on new terms. To make this transition, encore adults need time, space, and resources to consider next steps. In addition, it is often seen that older adults have not appropriately planned for later life, therefore are not aware of the resources that are available to them. By incorporating Age-Friendly programs in the community and schools, students can learn early about what to expect in later life, how they can assist older people in their lives by knowing the resources that are out there, and also how to leverage and promote careers in the aging field.
7. There are numerous “models” of good practice – both nationally and locally – that can inform this effort as they have been tried and tested to demonstrate their

effectiveness, paving the way for others to follow. It would be beneficial to learn from these experiences (such as AARP's Experience Corp, Raising A Reader, AmeriCorps Seniors Matching Program, Eldera Mentoring program, Oasis, etc.) and adopt their evidence-based approaches that have demonstrated impact and pathways to change. Grants and other support mechanisms are also available from many of the national programs that could allow Howard County to not only utilize lessons learned, but also to significantly scale up operations in a robust and effective way through partnerships with such efforts.

Examples of specific sub-activities:

1. Older adults could improve the educational and socio-emotional outcomes for children and youth through the following type of initiatives.

- a) Working with selected non-profits and community-based organizations to locate children/youth and matching them to vetted and suitable volunteers who can make a time commitment to work with each individual child and adult for designated age-groups, grade levels and subjects, including kindergarten/pre-school, elementary, middle and high school.
- b) Matching older adult volunteers with children and youth who are struggling or falling behind, especially in reading, math, science, and arts, especially due to the impact of COVID-19 which has led to isolation and marginalization of at-risk populations.
- c) Training a consistent group of volunteers to establish and grow relationships with students and teachers, providing nurture, a sense of security to children, and continuity of support on same days and times to create a reliable and productive schedule for struggling students and teachers (building upon some on-going programs such as A-OK, Bright Minds, CAC, etc.).
- d) Building self-confidence and stability for vulnerable and at-risk children and youth by providing them stability to succeed in education and life through weekly interactions with older adult volunteers that are adaptable to students' needs and can provide them with a reliable, safe and nurturing interaction. (Faith Community)
- e) Preparing a "Grandma and Grandpa on the Go" cadre of volunteers to act as mentors for at-risk children in Title 1 Schools and throughout K-12. (Faith Community)

- f) Enhancing children's learning by providing practical "real-life" examples of how classroom learning can be applied in different professions/occupations, through exposure to role models, mentors, and key informants.
- g) Developing observational measures to ascertain whether specific learning or behavioral challenges are being met such as, if students are learning, and if volunteers can calm and comfort at-risk children.
- h) Supporting Howard County Public School's Black Student Achievement Program (BSAP) which works in closing the achievement gap evident in the patterns of data between black students and the student population at large, in part through inter-generational tutoring and mentoring of students.
- i) Across America, states and cities are grappling with how to address the catastrophic toll of COVID-19 on student learning and well-being. However, one lesson the pandemic has revealed is the vast energy of a wide range of actors outside the school walls—from families to food banks to employers—who can be powerful education allies for supporting the holistic development of young people. By harnessing this energy, it is possible to lay the foundation for a new way of schooling—one that is flexible, customized to local needs, and equitable and that brings together educators, students, communities, and families (including older adults) to support every student every day. The Brookings Task Force on Next Generation Community Schools envisions a scaled-up community school approach, where schools are the hub of children's education and development—powered by shared leadership between schools and families, enriched learning experiences, integrated student supports, and strong community partnerships—to interrupt the growing education inequality.^{viii}

2. Students can be educated about the Age-Friendly Initiative through

- a) An assembly/special program on Age-Friendly awareness during school hours presented to the whole school;
- b) An after-school Age-friendly club or extra-curricular activity facilitated by a teacher and an older adult volunteer to encourage and inspire students to engage more with older adults through intergenerational opportunities created by the club;
- c) having schools across the County participate in an Age-Friendly Fair (similar to a science fair) which they would pick an Age-Friendly domain of interest and complete

a project to present during a school fair (some ideas may turn into an action item for the community – grant funded opportunity);

- d) Inventing a universal, influential, Age-Friendly character for young students which would be a character that would become well-known as the Age-Friendly Howard County Mascot; (Contest to raise awareness?)
- e) A wellness day to promote the adoption of healthy eating and living habits that can help improve well-being for old and young alike, and reduce negative perceptions and/or impacts of aging; (Nutrition focused, Kaiser Permanente, Great Sage, MOM's, David's Natural Market)
- f) Reciprocal project-based activities, such as *"Gathering Gardens" on school grounds, indoors or outdoors, and *"Wellness, Nutrition, Telehealth" sessions through multi-generational activities that promote socialization, growth, and collaboration, to increase understanding, and gain enrichment, opportunities to engage, communicate, and spend time in a safe, healthier environment. (Aetna, MAEOE, Master Gardeners, Community Ecology Institute).
- g) Students participating in a locally-designed Service-Learning program or event to earn service hours that would go toward their required 75 hours needed to graduate, and in which students would complete a project to offer some type of Age-Friendly benefit to the community, advocate for older adults, or find ways to enhance the quality of life for older adults.

3. Teachers and school councilors could become advocates of an Age-Friendly community

- a) Incorporate age-friendly awareness into lesson plans;
- b) Participate in a county-wide challenge to write a short children's story that would be read or available at all Howard County Public and Private Schools and at Libraries about the Age-Friendly Community in Howard County; and
- c) Create story board visuals, promotional flyers
- d) Invite Age-Friendly Ambassadors from the older adult community to help increase educational and cultural outreach to schools, increase opportunities for "special" teaching/learning sessions, and increasing understanding of "role models" from the professional community.

4. Students can support the well-being of older adults by helping them

- a) Navigate telehealth sites and teach/transfer knowledge and skills to encourage healthy behaviors;
- b) Create awareness surrounding one's personal responsibility to ensure good health at a young age, the idea of "health = wealth"; this could be carried out as a community fair or a school day activity;
- c) Access food, housing, transportation, or other basic care needs requiring skills that the young can provide when such deficits may exist among the older population affected their well-being.

References

ⁱ Howard County Demographic Overview | Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Division

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=fDFGOLGHZ9Q%3d&portalid=0> (p.8).

ⁱⁱ Matthew Kaplan, PhD., Professor, Intergenerational Programs and Aging, Penn State University. <https://aese.psu.edu/outreach/intergenerational/curricula-and-activities/handouts/factsheets/some-whats-and-whys-of-intergenerational-programming>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://blog.thegoodmangroup.com/benefits-of-intergenerational-programs>

^{iv} <https://www.gu.org>

^v Sanjay Gupta, 2021, "Keeping Sharp: Building a Better Brain at any Age"; Simon and Shuster/AARP. New York.

^{vi} <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2016/09/26/intergenerational-programs-not-just-nice-but-necessary/?sh=72d49183109a>

^{vii} About 36% of Howard County households include children under 18 years old. For Maryland and the US both, only 27% of households include children under 18. (Ref. Howard County Demographic Overview | Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Division, *ibid.* p.10).

viii <https://www.brookings-edu.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.brookings.edu/events/addressing-education-inequality-with-next-generation-community-schools/amp>

RSI 1a: Expand partnerships (including public-private partnerships) to increase targeted and inclusive inter-generational activities, and to help mobilize additional resources for strengthening intergenerational programs. Implement a mobilization and marketing strategy to attract and prepare volunteers and stakeholders to engage in inter-generational activities.

- A marketing and mobilization strategy will engage stakeholders (including government and non-government), that see the benefit of engaging volunteers in support of residents' well-being and growth.
- Volunteers will also serve as liaison (or ambassadors) for educational and cultural outreach to schools, clinics and libraries to engage and raise awareness about Age Friendly Intergenerational Programs.

RSI 1b: Conduct training for volunteers and host organizations to build their technical capacity to expand and improve purposeful inter-generational engagement activities. Activities would include the following:

- Recruit and conduct initial screening/vetting of volunteers.
- Provide preliminary orientation and training for volunteers and hosts prior to matching.
- Design and implement a targeted training program to augment volunteers' skills in coaching and mentoring (for example, specifically working with students and teachers to improve academic outcomes for students from K-12 in selected classrooms and communities, with a focus on disadvantaged students of all ages and backgrounds).
- Providing on-going "on-the-job" training to volunteers to help them succeed in their role.

RSI 1c: Expand awareness of and contributions to Age-Friendly Initiative in Howard County Public Schools (Elementary, Middle and High Schools) through incorporating "age awareness" classes and activities into the HCPSS curriculum and extra-curricular activities that help increase awareness about

aging issues such as dementia, caregiving, budgeting (money management?), etc.

Students are educated about the Age-Friendly Initiative during school hours or in after-school programs.

- Teachers and school councilors become advocates of an Age-Friendly community through targeted activities that increase understanding of and visibility of this community.
- Students participate in a locally-designed Service-Learning program or event to earn service hours that would go toward their required 75 hours needed to graduate, and in which students would complete a project to offer some type of Age-Friendly benefit to the community, advocate for older adults, or find ways to enhance the quality of life for older adults. Examples include Infomercial graphic, excursions and conversations, beautify an aging friends garden or volunteer for a community sustainability project.

RSI 1d: Provide age-friendly inter-generational opportunities for interaction with others through exercise programs, volunteering, and social events to bridge generations, dispel ageist myths and pre-conceptions while addressing loneliness and isolation.

Howard County Government has committed to improve policies in diversity, inclusion and equity (DEI). DEI is a term used to describe programs and policies that encourage representation and participation of diverse groups of people, including people of different genders, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, religions, cultures, ages, and sexual orientations. Reducing stereotypes and discrimination by age is one element of the focus on improved diversity, inclusion and equity.

Stereotyping diminishes the diversity and inherent value of the aging population and allows ageism to persist. Researchers at Cornell University have shown for the first time that it is possible to reduce ageist attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes through education and intergenerational contact.

(<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/06/190621140328.htm>).

Intergenerational programs provide experiences for children and older adults to bridge generations and learn to appreciate each other; dispelling ageist stereotypes enables both children and older adults to build a new frame of reference.

To help overcome stereotypes and support a positive view of aging, Howard County must work to ensure the county has accessible, vibrant programs in place which bridge generations gaps and embrace and support the physical, social and mental health needs of its steadily increasing older adult population. “Intergenerational programs not only bridge generation gaps, they give older adults the opportunity to share their experiences and recognize the value of their contributions to our community. And older adults learn a lot about the younger generations as well, creating mutual respect and understanding. These programs challenge the belief that older and younger people should live and participate in spaces that are separate from one another. Providing opportunities for younger and older people to participate in intergenerational programs is one way to promote respectful relationships and enhance the quality of life and health of all generations.” ([Challenging and Dismantling Ageist Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors Through Intergenerational Programs](#), Innovation in Aging, Oxford University Press).

Thus, creating an age-friendly environment fosters a sense of belonging and creates feelings of self-worth and connectivity for all residents, regardless of age.

RSI 2 Analyze and document the impact and value of intergenerational activities on all residents

RSI 2a: Document impact of intergenerational programs on all generations conducted through

- Analyze best practices, looking at existing programs to find gaps. Programs should be developed to augment programs, bridge the gaps in the County, and expand best practices.
- Qualitative and other pre-and-post engagement measures should be defined and systematically examined in a periodic manner. Systematic Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) through pre-and-post observations from respondents, and other evaluation tools and methods will help gauge program effectiveness, impact outcomes, and capacity development of volunteers, hosts, and beneficiaries.

RSI 3 Improve existing practices in businesses, including use of accessibility features and design, staff training and marketing to address needs of older adults

RSI 3a: Develop and implement an Age Friendly Business certification program which includes considerations for customer service, marketing, ambience, design and accessibility, and age-friendly services and products.

Definition: An Age-Friendly business is one which community residents of all ages and abilities can comfortably shop, dine, or receive services. These businesses would take deliberate actions to make their spaces and their operations more inclusive for customers and patrons of all ages and abilities utilizing the Age-Friendly Checklist and associated Age Friendly Ambassador Program. The Age-Friendly Checklist is intended to foster a unified approach to challenge all local Howard County businesses to consider how they change policy and practices to enhance the quality of life for our aging population residents.

Rationale: Age-Friendly is a growing market as everyone wants to feel valued. Age-Friendly encourages intergenerational and multicultural understanding and works to eliminate ageism to ensure consistent levels of high-quality service for all ages. Currently, 21 percent of Howard County residents are over 60 years old, and in 25 years this number will increase to nearly 30 percent.¹ Based on these statistics, enhancing local business through integration of the Age-Friendly Checklist will bolster inclusiveness and sense of community.

¹ County Executive Ball Launches New Age-Friendly Howard County Initiative, December 3, 2019

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/News/ArticleID/1764/News120319>

Programmatic: The primary steps involved for this initiative include gauging the voluntary interest of local businesses through their completion of an application. The business will then complete a self-assessment using the established Age-Friendly Business Checklist. Finally, an Age-Friendly Ambassador will then evaluate the business using the checklist and work collaboratively with the business to ensure best integration of the checklist criteria. If key criteria are met by the business, they will receive an Age-Friendly marketing decal to place in visible areas to identify they are an “Age-Friendly” business and the business name will be added to the list of Age-Friendly Businesses on the Chamber of Commerce website and www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly . Recertification will be required every two years.

The Age-Friendly application includes the following:

- Business Name, address, website, phone

- Name of Owner/Contact
- Brief description of business:
- Number of employees, type of customer service training offered.

Application must be signed by the authorized representative and sent to the Howard County Chamber of Commerce

Age-Friendly Business Checklist

Customer Service: Staff is trained to provide respectful and friendly customer service.

- ☐ Staff speak clearly and make eye contact.
- ☐ Staff are courteous, aware, knowledgeable and provide help.
- ☐ Customer feedback is actively sought (e.g. suggestion box).
- ☐ Staffing profile includes older people where possible.
- ☐ Where employees speak languages other than English, this is advertised and promoted to customers.

Marketing: Ensuring marketing and communications are age-friendly, easy to read, clear to understand, and the right information is provided when and where people need it.

- ☐ Fonts are large and clear, with a high color contrast between the text and background of promotional material.
- ☐ Advertisements and materials feature a full range of ages in materials and advertisements.
- ☐ Contact details are printed on all materials and are in and easy to find place.
- ☐ Business is well signed internally and externally.

Environment: As people age, many may experience a reduction in hearing and vision.

- ☐ Adequate lighting is provided throughout, particularly in entrances and exits.
- ☐ Excessive noise and loud music are minimized.
- ☐ Furnishings absorb excess sound and reduce echo.

Design and Accessibility: Ensuring the business is accessible will provide a more welcoming and pleasurable experience for everyone. The factors contributing to the accessibility of a building are not necessarily all in a business owner's control, however there are some strategies most businesses can consider.

- ☐ Furniture with rounded edges to reduce possible bumps and grazes.
- ☐ Adequate space between and around furniture to maneuver.
- ☐ "Parking" area inside designated for mobility aids and scooters.
- ☐ Products popular with older people are within reach on shelves.

- ☐ Doors are lightweight or automatic.
- ☐ Trip/slip hazards are removed and/or minimized.
- ☐ Magnifying glass is available.

Age-Friendly Services and Products: Offering services such as these will ensure a dedicated older customer base.

- ☐ Delivery services.
- ☐ Age-Friendly discounts, menu options, special days or loyalty card.
- ☐ Advertising the availability of electrical charging spots so mobility scooters can be charged and/or joining the recharge scheme.
- ☐ Offering smaller quantities at competitive prices.
- ☐ Personal service is available as an alternative to self-checkouts.